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Adoption Completes a Family

By: Paul Garrod



PAW PAW - Wanting to start over with a good family, 17-year-old Ryan Joseph Thompson said at his adoption hearing this week, "I'm tired of being shuffled around."

That shuffling came to a happy ending Tuesday morning at the Van Buren County Courthouse during an adoption hearing before Judge Frank Willis.

Ryan was formally adopted by his uncle, Cherokee Thompson of Breedsville.

When asked by Willis why he consented to the adoption, the younger Thompson said, "for the feeling of wanting to be with a family and not being shuffled around anymore. I want to be with a family that actually wants me and actually cares for me."

Ryan had spent a number of years in the system, and Cherokee was not aware that Ryan was up for adoption until his fiancée, Lori Skelton, happened to come across Ryan's picture on the MARE Web site. The two then contacted Julie Beckett, a child welfare worker at the Van Buren County Department of Human Services, who then started the adoption process.

Beckett attended the hearing, and when asked by Willis if she thought the adoption was a good idea, she replied, "absolutely. Ryan is a very mature young man. I really respect him because he didn't give up. A lot of kids that I work with that are teenagers say, 'You know what? I'm not going to put my neck out on the line. I'm not going to take that risk to see if there's a family out there that wants me. But Ryan never gave up.'"

She continued, "He's a good kid. I think they have a lot of fun together, and I have seen his self-confidence increase and his self-image improve."

Cherokee said, "Ryan has been a blessing to us, too. He's a young man that got caught up in the system, again. It was not his fault. Am I ashamed of my little sister? Yeah, very ashamed. But do I still love her? Yeah, she's made mistakes. Drugs destroy a lot of good families. He's a product of that."

Marking his first year on the Bangor varsity football team, Thompson received the team award for courage.

"He didn't get to start, but he stayed in there. (He) got knocked by the bigger boys and got up every time and pushed back. At the end of the season, he was pushing the bigger boys around," said the elder Thompson.

In addition to playing football, Ryan is also working parttime at Harding's Market in Bangor.

"He carried the grades, with working and playing football. That shows me a lot, a lot of character and a humble being," said Cherokee. "I'm proud of him and he's going to make an excellent son....we love him a lot. He fits in there like he's always been there, and that's amazing.... I'm glad to have him for a son. It's going to be a long, lasting relationship."

Ryan's new sister, Amie Kenyon, who also attended the ceremony, said, "I've always wanted a brother, so I am really excited."

Willis said to Ryan, "You came from a really tough life. You had to go through a lot of obstacles. You stand from a position of strength in the sense that you are going to be in a position to be tempted by drugs. People are going to try and get you to take those. You can say, 'I've seen what they've done. I'll tell you what they have done.'"

He concluded, "I believe God didn't give up on you. He realized what a fine young man you were, and realized he wanted to find a home for you that would be perfect for you."

Willis added with a chuckle, "I'm not saying that everything is going to be roses. You're going to have times when you're not going to like your uncle too well."

Following the adoption, the the family plans to visit New Orleans, then take a five-day Caribbean cruise, visiting Cozumel and Costa Maya.

The event marked Michigan Adoption Day, co-sponsored by the Michigan Adoption Re-sources, the Michigan Supreme Court and the Michigan Department of Human Services.

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